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**MEMOIRS OF HIMSELF**  
**ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON**

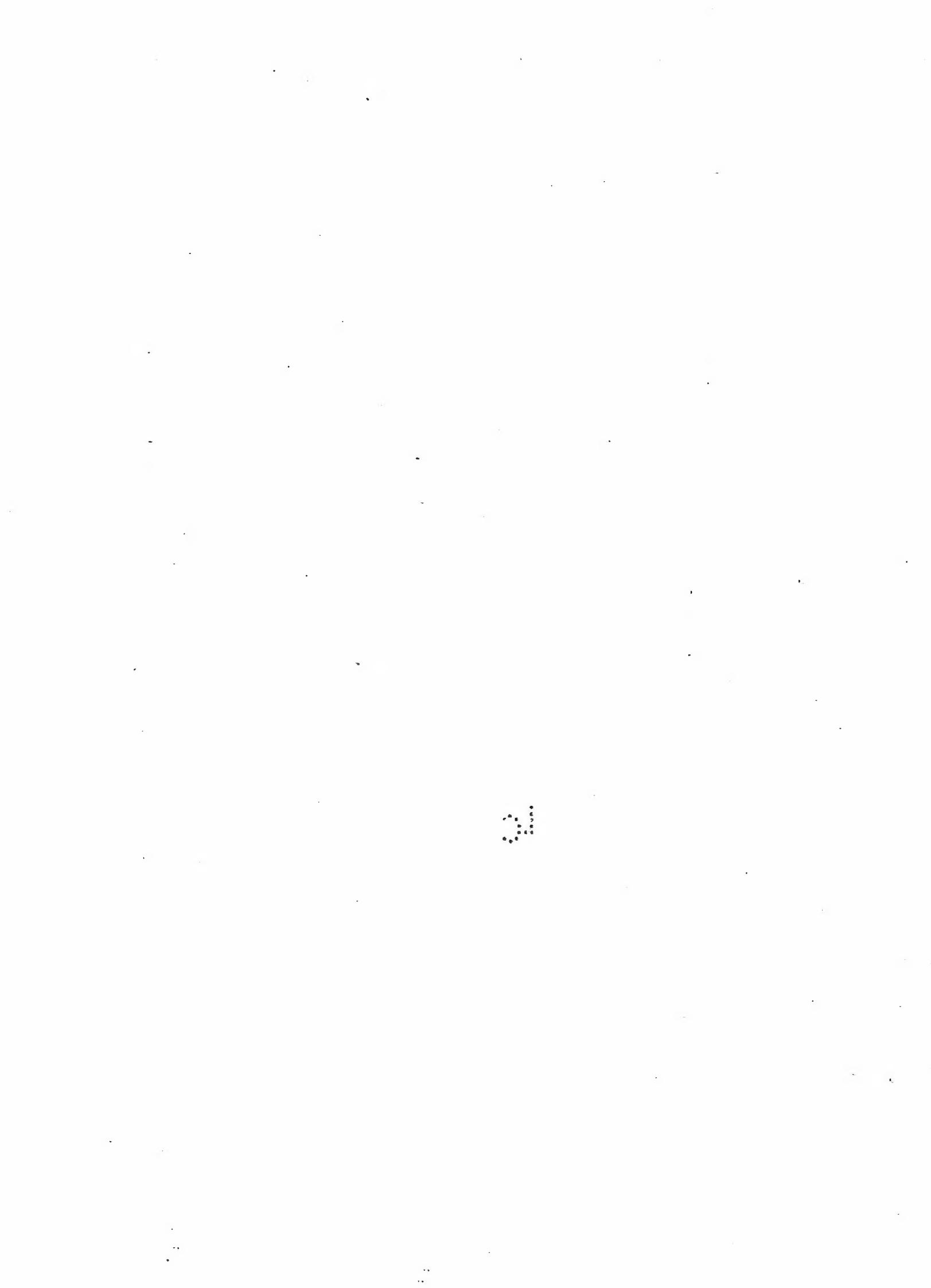
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*No. 13*

MEMOIRS OF HIMSELF  
BY  
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

PRINTED FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT  
IN THE POSSESSION OF  
HARRY ELKINS WIDENER

PHILADELPHIA  
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1912



The life of Robert Louis Stevenson is so well known to his admirers and readers that it hardly seems necessary to give any of the details here. Let it be sufficient to say that he was born in Edinburgh, on November 13th, 1850, and died at Apia, Samoa, on December 3d, 1894.

These recollections of his childhood were written in San Francisco, California, when the author was thirty years of age. The manuscript is written in ink on twenty-three pages of an ordinary quarto blank book, and is full of alterations and corrections. One or two passages have been so inked out that it is impossible to decipher more than a word here and there, and as Stevenson himself did this, I think it better not to try to decipher them. The manuscript is here printed exactly as it was written.

While this paper has never been printed in full, references and quotations from it will be found in Mr. Graham Balfour's "Life of Stevenson." In the American edition they occur in Volume I, pp. 40, 41, 49, 53 and 203.

When I had the manuscript typewritten with the view of printing it I sent copies to Sir Sidney Colvin, Stevenson's literary executor, and Mr. Thomas J. Wise, asking for their opinions and criticisms, and I quote some of their remarks.

Sir Sidney Colvin says in part: "I quite agree with you as to the interest and importance of this paper. It

was not among those handed to me by the family when I was preparing the Edinburgh Edition or I should certainly have printed it with other posthumous fragments in that edition." Further on, regarding Stevenson's criticism of the late Sir W. S. Gilbert, the letter says: "With reference to the fine and very characteristic passage on page 18 of your copy," (see page 26), "it should perhaps be noted that this outburst against the late W. S. Gilbert as a vulgarian would not have represented Stevenson's general opinion of him or his work, but had reference to his trick, in several of his operas, of bringing on an old and ugly woman as a butt for mock love-making by a younger man."

Mr. Thomas J. Wise, in a letter dated November 5th, 1911, writes: "Many thanks indeed for the typed copy of the R. L. S. MS. I have read it with the utmost pleasure. It is a highly important fragment of autobiography, and adds in no small degree to our appreciation of the early environments which served (also in no small degree) to shape and form the character of Stevenson's particular genius. The little paper ought most certainly to pass into print. Its author wrote it with the evident and expressed intention that it should pass into print. You will be doing a signal service to his memory if you carry out the task."

Mr. Wise, in a later letter, wrote that he had spoken to Dr. Edmund Gosse about the autobiography, and that he had expressed a desire to read it. Mr. Wise lent him the paper, which he returned with the following letter which Mr. Wise has kindly sent to me to keep with the manuscript:

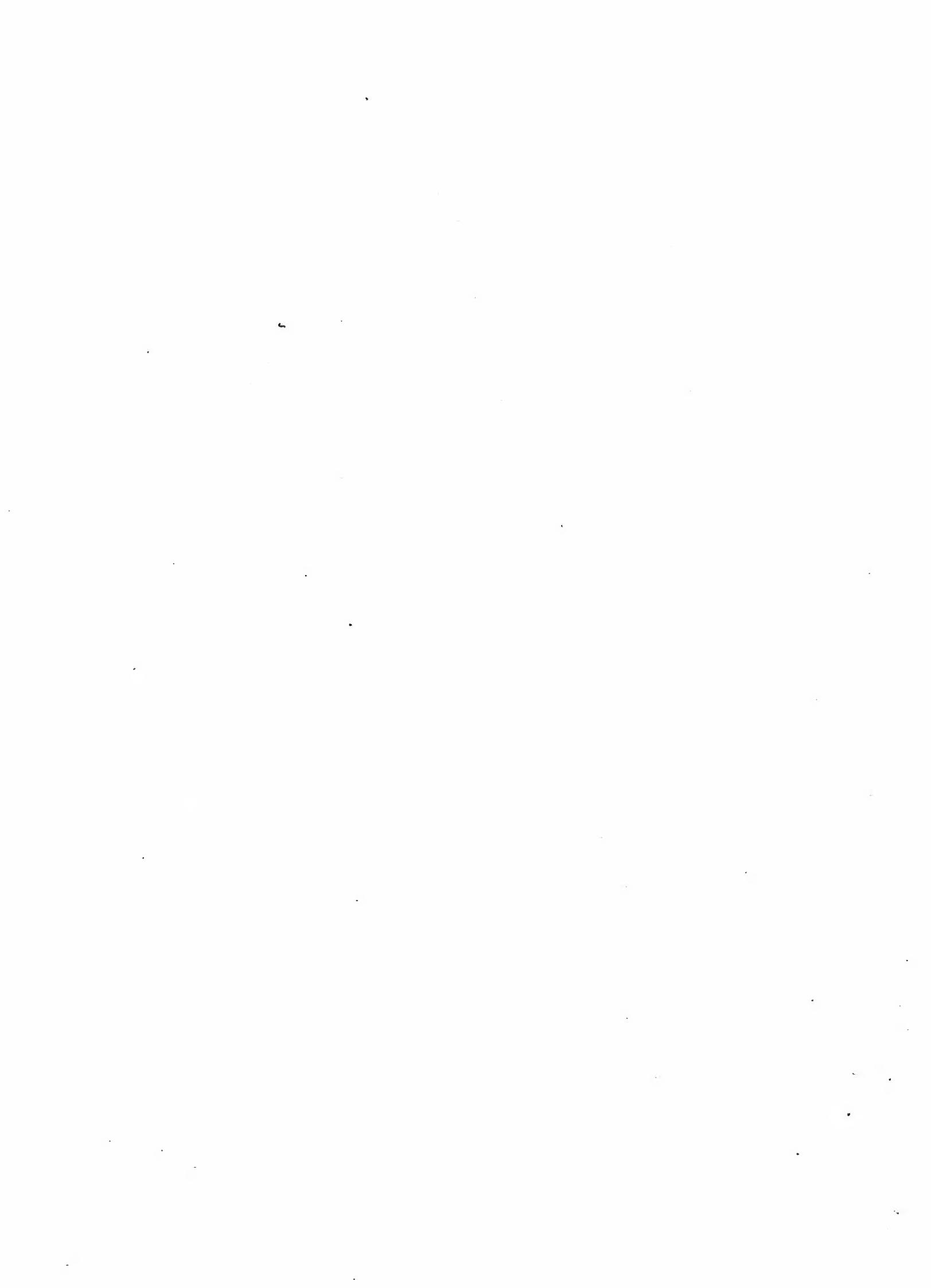
"I have now read the chapter of R. L. S. on his childhood with great emotion. It is a noble fragment, written when his style was at the height of its early freshness.

I am very much obliged to you for letting me see so splendid a piece of literatum. It is certainly the most valuable new piece of R. L. S. which has been produced since his death."

These letters seem to be all the introduction needed for the little paper, but in conclusion I wish to thank Sir Sidney Colvin, Mr. Thomas J. Wise, Dr. Edmund Gosse, for their valuable criticism, and Mr. Ellis Ames Ballard for several kind suggestions. My thanks are also due to Dr. A. S. W. Rosenbach for his kind assistance in helping me prepare the paper, and to Mr. Luther S. Livingston, who procured the manuscript for me.

H. E. W.

January, 1912.



MEMOIRS OF HIMSELF  
BY  
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

BOOK I—CHILDHOOD.  
GIVEN TO ISOBEL STEWART STRONG  
THE AMANUENSIS  
FOR FUTURE USE WHEN THE UNDER-  
WRITER IS DEAD

WITH LOVE  
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.



I have the more interest in beginning these memoirs where and how I do, because I am living absolutely alone in San Francisco, and because from two years of anxiety and, according to the doctors, a touch of malaria, I may say I am altogether changed into another character. After weeks in this city, I know only a few neighbouring streets; I seem to be cured of all my adventurous whims and even of human curiosity; and am content to sit here by the fire and await the course of fortune. Indeed I know myself no longer; and as I am changed in heart, I hope I have the more chance to look back impartially on all that has come and gone heretofore.

There is, after all, no truer sort of writing than what is to be found in autobiographies, and certainly none more entertaining. Or if any, it is in fiction of the higher class which is the quintessence and last word both of veracity and entertainment. A man is perhaps not very sure of his taste in matters that concern him so nearly as the facts of his own career; he is not perhaps in a position to expand or broider; but where can he have so fine an opportunity of condensation? I shall try here to be very dense and only to touch on what concerned me very deeply; for, as I am after all a man, that must be to some degree the concern of mankind.

It has been a question with me whether it could ever be worth while to write the lives of any that were not heroic; but a recollection of my own youth has sufficiently laid the scruple. This life of ours is at best so mixed a business, that between good and evil, between sense and folly, between the selfish and the generous impulse,

we must always be glad to find ourselves countenanced and, as it were, brothered by a fellow man; and where a life, low as it may be, has any upward tendency and does not progressively condescend with the baser parts of nature, if it be truly told, it may not only console but encourage others. Even where there is no human dignity, there will be some human pathos; even when no great right has been done, and the being under review has merely struggled along the border land of good and evil with conspicuous lapses, that struggle itself is something holy. I suppose I am in agreement with the very best of men, when I say that I should wish, if I could live again, to change at least three quarters of my thoughts and actions; and still, in company with the worst, I have moments in my experience upon which I can look back with unmixed satisfaction.

Jan: '79.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This must have been Jan. '80, he did not go to America till autumn 1879.  
M. I. S. 1894. [This note is in his mother's autograph.]

## BOOK I—CHILDHOOD.

I was born in Edinburgh, in 1850, the 13th of November, my father Thomas Stevenson, my mother Margaret Isabella Balfour. My mother's family, the Balfours of Pilrig, is a good provincial stock; for near three centuries before my appearance, these Balfours had been judges, advocates and ministers of the gospel, and I believe them related to many of the so-called good families of Scotland. The present laird, John Balfour, has made out the family tree, but I have never had the curiosity to see it. It concerns me much more that John Balfour of Kinlock, the covenanting fanatic, was an ancestral cousin; and that Dr. Smith of Galston—"Smith opens out his cauld harangues"—was my mother's maternal grandfather. Thus I may call myself connected both with Scott and Burns. X<sup>2</sup>.

My father's family is much more remarkable; this much at least may be said for it, that its history is unparalleled. My father heard a tradition that the first of his race came from France as Barber-chirurgeon to Cardinal Beaton; but there is small reason to doubt that we Stevensons are of Scandinavian descent. I wish I could prove we were related to old John Stevenson, author of the "Rare soul-strengthening and comforting Cordial"<sup>3</sup>; and at least, so dark is the family history, I am at liberty to tell myself it may have been so. We

<sup>2</sup> Old Robert Wodrow too, of the inimitable *Analecta* is my relation through the Balfours.

<sup>3</sup> Celtic, my dear?

rose out of obscurity in a clap. My father and Uncle David made the third generation, one Smith and two Stevenson, of direct descendants who had been engineers to the Board of Northern Lights; there is scarce a deep sea light from the Isle of Man north about to Berwick, but one of my blood designed it; and I have often thought that to find a family to compare with ours in the promise of immortal memory, we must go back to the Egyptian Pharaohs:—upon so many reefs and forelands that not very elegant name of Stevenson is engraved with a pen of iron upon granite. My name is well known as that of the Duke of Argyle among the fishers, the skippers, the seamen and the masons of my native land. Whenever I smell salt water, I know I am not far from one of the works of my ancestors. The Bell Rock stands monument for my grandfather; the Skerry Vohr for my Uncle Alan; and when the lights come out at sundown along the shores of Scotland, I am proud to think they burn more brightly for the genius of my father.

I was an only child and, it may be in consequence, both intelligent and sickly. I have three powerful impressions of my childhood: my sufferings when I was sick, my delights in convalescence at my grandfather's manse of Colinton, near Edinburgh, and the unnatural activity of my mind after I was in bed at night. As to the first, I suppose it generally granted that none suffer like children from physical distress. We learn, as we grow older, a sort of courage under pain which marvelously lightens the endurance; we have made up our mind to its existence as a part of life; but the spirit of the child is filled with dismay and indignation, and these pangs of the mind are often little less intolerable than the physical distress that caused them. My recollection of the long nights when I was kept awake by coughing are only relieved by the thought of the tenderness of my nurse and second mother (for my first will not be jealous) Alison Cunningham. She was more patient than I can

suppose of an angel; hours together she would help and console me in my paroxysms; and I remember with particular distinctness, how she would lift me out of bed, and take me, rolled in blankets, to the window, whence I might look forth into the blue night starred with street-lamps, and see where the gas still burned behind the windows of other sickrooms. These were feverish, melancholy times; I cannot remember to have raised my head or seen the moon or any of the heavenly bodies; my eyes were turned downward to the broad lamplit streets, and to where the trees of the garden rustled together all night in undecipherable blackness; yet the sight of the outer world refreshed and cheered me; and the whole sorrow and burden of the night was at an end with the arrival of the first of that long string of country carts that, in the dark hours of the morning, with the neighing of horses, the cracking of whips, the shouts of drivers and a hundred other wholesome noises, creaked, rolled, and pounded past my window.

I suffered, at other times, from the most hideous nightmares, which would wake me screaming and in the extremest frenzy of terror. On such occasions, none could pacify my nerves but my good father, who would rise from his own bed and sit by mine, full of childish talk and reproducing aimless conversations with the guard or the driver of a mail coach, until he had my mind disengaged from the causes of my panic. These were sometimes very strange; one that I remember seems to indicate a considerable force of imagination: I dreamed I was to swallow the world: and the terror of the fancy arose from the complete conception I had of the hugeness and populousness of our sphere. Disproportion and a peculiar shade of brown, something like that of sealskin, haunted me particularly during these visitations.

I have not space to tell of my pleasures at the manse. I have been happier since; for I think most people exaggerate the capacity for happiness of a child; but I have

never again been happy in the same way. For indeed it was scarce a happiness of this world, as we conceive it when we are grown up, and was more akin to that of an animal than to that of a man. The sense of sunshine, of green leaves, and of the singing of birds, seems never to have been so strong in me as in that place. The deodar upon the lawn, the laurel thickets, the mills, the river, the church bell, the sight of people ploughing, the Indian curiosities with which my uncles had stocked the house, the sharp contrast between this place and the city where I spent the other portion of my time, all these took hold of me, and still remain upon my memory, with a peculiar sparkle and sensuous excitement. I have somewhere part of a long paper<sup>4</sup> on my solitary pleasures about the manse and garden; but I could write volumes and never be done; so clear, telling and memorable were my impressions.

It is odd, after so long an interval, to recall those incidents that struck me deepest. Once as I lay, playing hunter, hid in a thick laurel, and with a toy gun upon my arm, I worked myself so hotly into the spirit of my play, that I think I can still see the herd of antelope come sweeping down the lawn and round the deodar; it was almost a vision. Again, one warm summer evening on the front green, my aunt showed me the wing-bone of an albatross, told me of its largeness and how it slept upon the wing above the vast Pacific, and quoted from the "Ancient Mariner":

"With my cross bow,  
I shot the Albatross."

I do not believe anything so profoundly affected my imagination; and to this day, I am still faithful to the Albatross, as the most romantic creature of fable (or nature, I know not which), and the one, besides, that

<sup>4</sup> Memories and Portraits, 1887. The Manse, page 106. Is this the paper referred to?

has the noblest name. I remember in particular, a view I had from an attic window, suddenly beholding, with delighted wonder, my ordinary playgrounds at my feet; and another outlook, when I climbed a hawthorn near the gate, and saw over the wall upon the snuff-mill garden, thick with flowers and bright with sunshine, a paradise not hitherto suspected.

My grandfather, the noblest looking old man I have ever seen, was one of the last, I suppose, to speak broad Scotch and be a gentleman; he did not, however, do so in his sermons; which were in English and pretty dry, I fancy. I remember showing him my soldiers one day after dinner, as he sat over his daily nuts and port; he told me to play at the battle of Coburg, which gave me a great sense of his antiquity, as I had never heard of that engagement. I chanced to be in the house when he was taken with his last sickness, and was packed home again to be out of the way. He was up, and trying to write letters, an hour or so before he died; so that I think we may say he died young, although he was eighty.<sup>5</sup> I shall not forget my last sight of him, the morning ere I left. He was pale and his eyes were to me, somewhat appallingly blood-shot. He had a dose of Gregory's mixture administered and then a barley sugar drop to take the taste away; but when my aunt wished to give one of the drops to me, the rigid old gentleman interfered: No Gregory's mixture, no barley sugar, said he. I feel with a pang, that it is better he is dead for my sake; if he still see me, it is out of a clearer place than any earthly situation, whence he may make allowances and consider both sides. But had he lived in the flesh, he would have suffered perhaps as much from what I think my virtues as from what I acknowledge to be my faults. Thus we may be reconciled to the passing away of the aged, that it leaves a field for youth.

<sup>5</sup> In the manuscript the word "three" has been inserted after "eighty" in a different hand, making his grandfather eighty-three when he died.

I have mentioned my aunt. In her youth she was a wit and a beauty, very imperious, managing, and self sufficient. But as she grew up she began to suffice for all the family as well. An accident on horseback, she says, but I have heard it was a natural cause, made her nearly deaf and blind, and suddenly transformed this wilful Empress into the most serviceable and amiable of women and the family maid of all work. There were thirteen of the Balfours, as (oddly enough) there were of the Stevensons also; and the children of the family came home to her to be nursed, to be educated, to be mothered, from the infanticidal climate of India. There must sometimes have been half a score of us children about the Manse; and all were born a second time from Aunt Jane's tenderness. It was strange when a new party of these sallow young folk came home, perhaps with an Indian ayah. This little country manse was a centre of the world: and Aunt Jane represented charity. The text, my mother says, must have been written for her and Aunt Jane: more are the children of the barren than the children of the married wife.

We children had naturally many plays together; I usually insisted on the lead, and was invariably exhausted to death by evening. One day of such happy excitement was often followed by two or three in bed with a fever—*furia scozzese*.

But the time when my mind displayed most activity was after I was put to bed and before I fell asleep. I remember these periods more distinctly and I believe further back than any other part of my childhood. I would lie awake declaiming aloud to myself my views of the universe, in something that I called singing although I have no ear and in a measure of my own although at that time I can have known nothing of verse. One of these *Songstries*, for so I named my evening exercises, was taken down by my father from behind the door, and I have seen it within the last few years. It dealt sum-

marily with the Fall of Man, taking a view most inimical to Satan; but what is truly odd, it fell into a loose, irregular measure with a tendency toward the ten-syllable heroic line. This, as I am sure I can then have heard little or nothing but hymn meters, seems to show a leaning in the very constitution of the language to that form of verse; or was it but a trick of the ear, inherited from 18th Century ancestors? It was certainly marked when taken in connection with my high-strung religious ecstasies and terrors. It is to my nurse that I owe these last: my mother was shocked when, in days long after, she heard what I had suffered. I would not only lie awake to weep for Jesus, which I have done many a time, but I would fear to trust myself to slumber lest I was not accepted and should slip, ere I awoke, into eternal ruin. I remember repeatedly, although this was later on and in the new house, waking from a dream of Hell, clinging to the horizontal bar of the bed, with my knees and chin together, my soul shaken, my body convulsed, with agony. It is not a pleasant subject. I piped and snivelled over the Bible, with an earnestness that had been talked into me. I would say nothing without adding "If I am spared," as though to disarm fate by a show of submission; and some of this feeling still remains upon me in my thirtieth year.<sup>6</sup> I shook my numskull over the spiritual welfare of my parents, because they gave dinner parties and played cards, things condemned in the religious biographies on which my mind was fed; and once, for a crowning point, I turned the tables on my nurse herself. She was reading aloud to me from Cassell's Family Paper a story called *The Soldier of Fortune*;<sup>7</sup> it was about the Crimean War, then lately ended; and from some superfluity of love affairs, Cummy, (so I called my nurse) had expressed

<sup>6</sup> This I think proves Mrs. Stevenson's statement that the paper was written in 1880 and not 1879, as Stevenson has dated the Introduction.

<sup>7</sup> This story by the author of "Stanfield Hall" appeared in 1855. Chapter I is in the issue of April 14th and Chapter 79 (the last) in that of December 29th.

some fear lest it should turn out "a regular novel." That night I had a pain in my side which frightened me; I began to see Hell pretty clear, and cast about for any sin of which this might be punishment; and *The Soldier of Fortune* occurred to me as my leading "worldliness" of the moment. I foreswore it then and there; and next morning announced and uprightly held to my vow. So instead of something healthy about battles, I continued to have my mind defiled with Brainerd, M'Cheyne, and Mrs. Winslow, and a whole crowd of dismal and morbid devotees. I speak with measure; knowing these were admirable people. But I have never wished to be good in their way; nor, if that were the way of the majority, can I suppose that this world would be either good or kind or pleasant; and for a child, their utterances are truly poisonous. The life of Brainerd, for instance, my mother had the sense to forbid, when we were some way through it. God help the poor little hearts who are thus early plunged among the breakers of the spirit! They should dwell by shallow, sunny waters, plucking the lilies of optimism; but to go down into the great deep is not for these unused and trembling sailors.

When at night my mind was disengaged from either of these extremes, and there was no high wind, for I always hated and do still bitterly hate the noise of a storm about a house, I told myself romances in which I played the hero. Now and then the subject would be the animation of my play things; but usually these fantasies embraced the adventures of a lifetime, full of far journeys and Homeric battles. I note these peculiarities. They had no reference to religion; although that filled my mind so greatly at other moments. I was a pure old pagan when I came to practice. Secondly, for as far back as I can remember, they bore always some relation to women, and Eros and Anteros must have almost equally divided my allegiance. And lastly they would be concluded always with a heroic, and sometimes

with a cruel, death. I never left myself till I was dead.

When I was five years of age, my cousin Robert Alan Stevenson, came to stay at my father's house; he was three years older than I, an imaginative child who had lived in a dream with his sisters, his parents, and the Arabian Nights, and more unfitted for the world, as was shown in the event, than an angel fresh from heaven. I shall speak of him some day more at length on his own account; but just now I have to do with myself and only mention others as they touched and moulded my character. We lived together in a purely visionary state. We had countries; his was Nosingtonia, mine Encyclopedia; where we ruled and made wars and inventions, and of which we were perpetually drawing maps. His was shaped a little like Ireland; mine lay diagonally across the paper like a large tip-cat. We were never weary of dressing up. We drew, we coloured our pictures; we painted and cut out the figures for a pasteboard theatre; this last one of the dearest pleasures of my childhood, and one I was so loath to relinquish, that I followed it in secret till I must have been fifteen. This visit of Bob's was altogether a great holiday in my life.

Incidentally, too, I was then introduced to literature. My uncle, David Stevenson, offered a prize of £1 to the best *History of Moses* from any of us Stevenson cousins. My history was, of course, dictated; and from that day forth, I would always be dictating whenever I could command a pen. The *History of Moses* was copiously illustrated by the author in a very free style. In these pictures, each Israelite was represented with a pipe in his mouth, cheering the desert miles. I was, indeed, always drawing; but it was from a purely imitative and literary impulse. I never drew from nature, nor even from a copy; but broodered away at my fancies in a spirit the reverse of the artistic. It is told of me that I came once to my mother with these words: "Mama,

I have drawed a man's body; shall I draw his soul now?" And this shows how early I was at it, and how I merely used it as a language with no thought of exact form or plastic beauty. Not so much a quickness to draw, as an intensity of looking, should mark the youth of the true painter.

I learned to read when I was seven, looking over the pictures in illustrated papers while recovering from a gastric fever. It was thus done at a blow; all previous efforts to teach me having been defeated by my active idleness and remarkable in consequence of mind. The same fever is remarkable to me for another reason: one of my little cousins (D. A. S.) having sent me a letter every day. This was a kindness that I shall never forget till the day of my death; though I see little of him now, and cannot think he much affects me. I have an incredible, smothered warmth of affection towards him in my heart. As he will probably outlive me, I hope he may see these words and take the thanks I have been always too shy to renew to him in person.

On the whole I have not much joy in remembering these early years. I was as much an egotist as I have ever been; I had a feverish desire of consideration; I was ready to lie, although more often wrongly accused of it, or rather wrongfully punished for it, having lied unconsciously; I was sentimental, snivelling, goody, morbidly religious. I hope and do believe I am a better man than I was a child. With my respects to Wordsworth.

I was lovingly, but not always wisely treated, the great fault being Cummy's overhaste to make me a religious pattern. I have touched already on the cruelty of bringing a child among the awful shadows of man's life; but it must not be forgotten, it is also unwise, and a good way to defeat the educator's purpose. The idea of sin, attached to particular actions absolutely, far from repelling, soon exerts an attraction on young minds.

Probably few over-pious children have not been tempted, sometime or other and by way of dire experiment, to deny God in set terms. The horror of the act, performed in solitude, under the blue sky; the smallness of the voice uttered in the stillness of noon; the panic flight from the scene of the bravado: all these will not have been forgotten. But the worst consequence is the romance conferred on doubtful actions; until the child grows to think nothing more glorious, than to be struck dead in the very act of some surprising wickedness. I can never again take so much interest in anything, as I took, in childhood, in doing for its own sake what I believed to be sinful. And generally, the principal effect of this false, common doctrine of sin, is to put a point on lust. The true doctrine has a very different influence, but had best be taught to children in particular instances, and under the general routine of kindness and unkindness.

Had I died in these years, I fancy I might perhaps have figured in a tract. I have been sometimes led to wonder if all the young saints of whom I have read and meditated with enthusiasm in my early periods, suffered, from their biographers the same sort of kindly violence, or had idealized themselves by the same simply necessary suppressions, that would have fitted myself and my career for that gallery of worthies. In the case of the infantile saint, the devil's advocate is silent. The aspirations have not yet been brought to the touch of practice; the personal is still potential; saint and prig and coward are still not to be distinguished. Yet, in my case and with all my evil on my head, it is yet true there was something of the saintly. Not because I wept over the Saviour's agony; not because I could repeat, with some appropriate inflections, a psalm or two or the story of the Shumanite's son; but because I had a great fund of simplicity, believed all things and the good rather than the evil, was very prone to love and inaccessible to hatred, and never failed in gratitude for any

benefit I had the wit to understand. The sight of deformed persons and above all of hideous old women moved in me a sort of panic horror; yet I can well recall with what natural courtesy I strove to conceal my disaffection. Fairy, the hunchback druggist of Bridge of Allan, was a terror to me by day and haunted my dreams at night; but my pity was stronger than my distaste; and I made it a point to command myself and speak to him with a child's friendliness, whenever the poor vain man, little understanding what was in my heart, condescended to address me. There was an old woman, Annie Torrence, who helped at the washing I believe; an inhuman, bearded spectre, with a human heart in spite of all; who made it her business to be kind to me and show off before me, singing "It's all round my hat for a twelvemonth and a day" with witchlike steps and gestures, backing to and fro before me, the horrified and fascinated child. Out of my dreams, I have never feared so cordially any other phenomenon as this of Annie Torrence and her song; for I thought the song to be hers and to commemorate some romance of her so-long departed youth. Yet I know I was ever consciously busy in my own small and troubled soul, to bear a good face before this dismal entertainment and conceal from the old woman the disastrous effect she was producing. I think I was born with a sense of what is due to age; for the more I interrogate my recollections the more traces do I find of that respect struggling with the dislike of what is old and then seemed to me to be ugly. Of all the cruel things in life, the cruellest, it may be, is the departure of all beauty from those who have been the desired mothers and mistresses of men in a former generation. Pagans like Horace, devils like Villon—and yet he was a devil with a dash of the angelic, were it only in his wings—and simple crass vulgarians, like Gilbert, so much worse than the worst of the devilish,—take an opportunity for some cheap effect of art from these distressing

changes. I thank God, when I was a child I knew a higher decency. A man should have never been suckled at a woman's bosom, he should never have slept in a woman's embrace, he should never have known, in the most passing manner, the pleasures of a woman's affection or the support of a woman's tenderness, so far to forget what is honourable in sentiment, what is essential in gratitude, or what is tolerable by other men.

To finish this matter, I must tell a story which illustrates the best of me and is, at the same time, pitifully comical. In Howe Street, round the corner from our house, I often saw a lame boy of rather a rough and poor appearance. He had one leg much shorter than the other, and wallowed in his walk, in consequence, like a ship in a seaway. I had read more than enough, in tracts and goody story books, of the isolation of the infirm; and after many days of bashfulness and hours of consideration, I finally accosted him, sheepishly enough I daresay, in these words: "Would you like to play with me?" I remember the expression, which sounds exactly like a speech from one of the goody books that had nerved me to the venture. But the answer was not the one I had anticipated, for it was a blast of oaths. I need not say how fast I fled. This incident was the more to my credit as I had, when I was young, a desperate aversion to addressing strangers, though when once we had got into talk I was pretty certain to assume the lead. The last particular may still be recognized. About four years ago, I saw my lame lad, and knew him again at once. He was then a man of great strength, rolling along, with an inch of cutty in his mouth and a butcher's basket on his arm. Our meeting had been nothing to him, but it was a great affair to me.

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